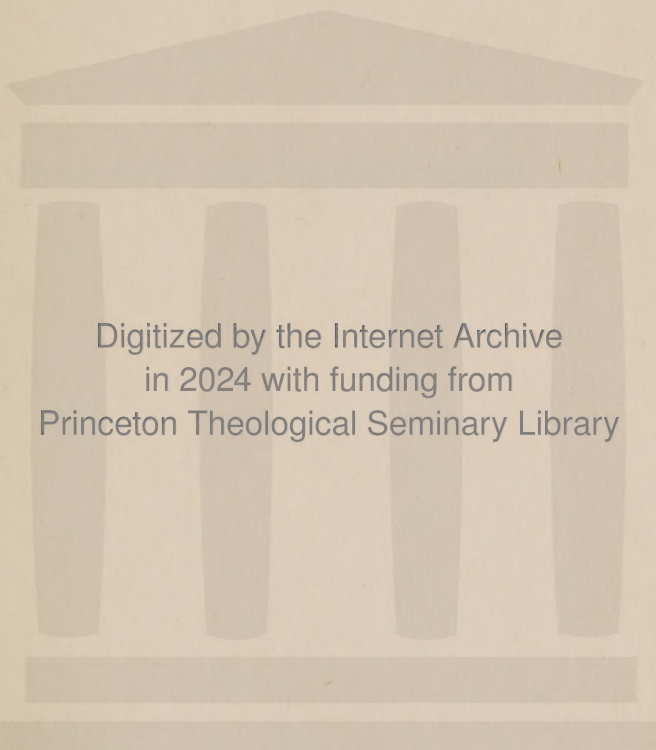


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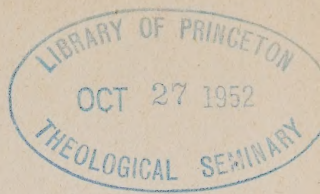
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# JESUS AND THE HIDDEN BIBLE





# JESUS AND THE HIDDEN BIBLE

*A Study of Gospel Sources*

by  
JOSEPH HAYYIM KRIMSKY



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## FOREWORD

MY PURPOSE in writing this book is to present what, from the standpoint of a patient and devoted student of Judeo-Christianity, appears to be an inescapable conclusion, namely, that Jesus of Nazareth lived and died under the spell of the Messianic hopes and expectations, the Apocalyptic visions and revelations of an approaching *World-to-come* in which the hearts of his people were steeped.

These mysticisms found expression in the Apocryphal Books which, during the two centuries preceding the Christian era, though banned and forbidden by the Rabbis as *hidden* and *outside* Writings, nevertheless were widely disseminated and memorized among the *Am-ha-Aretz*, the people of the soil, to whom Jesus and his disciples belonged.

Jesus believed himself to be the realization of Apocryphal revelation and the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy.

*All things that are written by the Prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished.*—Luke 18:31.

As it was written so must it come to pass. The word of the Prophet, the vision of the Seer, became manifest in the Sermon on the Mount, as well as in the Master's

recognition of himself as the Suffering Servant, together with his acceptance of the *pangs of the Messiah*—the ordeal of Gethsemane, the agony of Calvary, the resurrection and the Ascent to a glorious Kingship in Heaven.

*The Son of Man is delivered into the hands of men and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed he shall rise on the third day.*—Mark 9: 31, 32.

It is written in the Apocryphal Books of Esdras and Enoch:

*This present life . . . of pain and travail . . . is not the end where much glory doth abide . . . but the day of doom shall be at hand and the beginning of immortality . . . free of incorruptibility . . . the earth will restore what has been committed to it; and Sheol what it has received . . . He shall pick out the righteous and the holy among them; for the day when they shall be delivered is nigh. The Chosen and anointed one of the Lord shall sit upon His throne; for the holy spirit has given it to Him and glorified Him . . . for in those days the Chosen one has arisen and the earth will rejoice . . . and righteous judgement will be manifested in all the world.*

It was the common faith in that day, a faith nurtured by the hidden writings—and it became the Christ-creed of the disciples and followers of Jesus—that the coming of the Messiah incarnate, his sacrificial anguish and death

and his Ascent to the throne of Sovereignty in the *Malkut Shamaim*, the Kingdom of Heaven, had been ordained by the Divine Will before ever the world was created.

The major theme of this book, in short, is that Jesus, a child of his people, appeared on earth not only to fulfill, as he said, the Law and the Prophets, but also to accomplish what he believed to be the destiny and redemptive mission of *The Son of Man*, *The First-Born and Only Begotten of God*, by vicarious expiation, through the sufferings of the Messiah, as foretold and envisioned in the Apocryphal Books.





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## JESUS AND THE HIDDEN BIBLE





# I

We unfortunately know very little about the early life of Jesus. The Gospels of St. Mark and St. John commence with the meeting between Jesus and John the Baptist, at which period Jesus was about thirty years old. In the Books of St. Matthew and St. Luke we are told of a supernatural conception and miraculous birth. Mark, the earliest of the Gospel writers (65 A.D.), does not give us any account of these traditions. His Gospel was based on an earlier document or collection of documents containing the Logia or Sayings of Jesus and many stories of incidents and events in the life of the Master. This original source book, now lost, has been called the *Quelle*, or Mainspring, by Bible scholars. Mark, who was the companion and interpreter of Peter and who undoubtedly was well acquainted with the *Quelle*, makes no mention of the immaculate conception or the virgin birth. Neither does John, the Beloved Disciple. We read in Matthew:

*Now all this is come to pass that it might be fulfilled what was spoken by the Lord through the Prophet Isaiah, saying, "Behold the virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son and they shall call his name Immanuel," which is, being interpreted, God with us. (1:23)*

The passage is quoted from the 7th Chapter of Isaiah where the prophet appears before King Ahaz and exhorts him to trust in the Lord and to accept the assurance that this child, Immanuel, who will be born to an *Almah*, a young woman, will yet be a babe when the enemies, threatening the holy city, will be forsaken and discomfited. Another tradition recorded in Matthew and Luke is that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Here again we have a tradition of the fulfillment of a prophecy, this time by Micah (740 B.C.) who wrote :

*And thou Bethlehem, land of Judah, art in no wise least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come forth a ruler which shall be a shepherd of my people, Israel.*

Bethlehem was the city of David, where, according to the tradition, would be born the King Messiah, the Son of David who would bring redemption to Israel and salvation to the Gentiles. The story is beautifully told in Luke how a decree went out from Augustus Caesar that all the world should be enrolled. It was one of the periodic census takings for the purpose of taxation. Joseph, who was of the royal house of David, lived with his young wife Mary in the picturesque little town of Nazareth among the green hills of Galilee. The distance between Nazareth and Bethlehem is about 65 miles as the crow flies; much longer by the difficult and tortuous roads of that day. *Mary was great with child* and was delivered of her firstborn son in the stable of an inn, *because there was no room for them in the inn.*



There is a puzzling conflict between this idyllic tale and the facts of history which tell us that Quirinius, under whose administration the census was ordered, was governor of Syria in the year 6 A.D., that is, about ten years after Jesus was born. Another detail that adds to our bewilderment is that Roman census taking among the Jews in Palestine was not done by families but by tribes. The householders were not required to journey to the towns of their origin. The tradition of the flight to Egypt is included in Matthew as another fulfillment of prophecy, in support of which he quotes Hosea:

*Out of Egypt have I called my son.*

Here again there is a clash between tradition and history, for Herod the Cruel who, we are told, ordered the massacre of the innocents in order to destroy the newborn Christ, was dead about a year when Jesus was born. (Does it lower the stature of the most significant and influential figure in all history to say that he was born in the Galilean town of Nazareth rather than in the traditional birthplace of Bethlehem as narrated by two of the Gospel writers? That of course is unthinkable. Moses still towers above Mount Sinai even though we know that the Pentateuch was not written by the hand of the great Lawgiver himself. Nor do we need the legends of a supernatural conception (as in Buddha and Zoroaster) and a miraculous virgin birth, in order to add one cubit to the lofty height and majestic proportions of the personality of Jesus of Nazareth.)

## II

What do we know about the early life of Jesus? If the boy is father to the man, as is true, then we can see him growing up as a good son, a kind shepherd and provider to the family of brothers and sisters after his father Joseph died; an able and conscientious worker, a diligent reader and student of the Books of Moses, the Prophets, the Psalms and the Books of Wisdom. There were also the Apocryphal and Apocalyptic books of Ben Sirach, of Enoch and Esdras and the very popular Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. All these non-canonical "hidden" writings concerned themselves with moral conduct and right living, but above all they were occupied with the hereafter, with the coming Day of the Lord and with the Messiah who in the vision of Daniel:

*Came with the clouds of Heaven like unto a Son of Man, and He came even unto the ancient of days and they brought him near before Him. And there was given Him Dominion and Glory, and a Kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and languages should serve Him, an everlasting Dominion which shall not pass away; A Kingdom that shall not be destroyed.*

He was *the first-born, the only-begotten*. These were the visions and revelations that filled the mind of the young Jesus while at work in his carpenter's shop, and on the Sabbath, after synagogue services, while resting on the slope of a hill and gazing dreamily and thoughtfully at the snow-white head of distant Mount Hermon. Here he would reflect on what he had read in the previous night, in the late hours, by the light of an oil lamp. The saintly Enoch wrote:

*The elect one shall be seated on the throne of glory. And there shall stand up in that day, all the kings and the mighty, and the exalted, and those who hold the earth. And they shall see and recognize how He sits on the throne of His glory. And they shall be downcast of countenance when they see the Son of Man sitting on the throne of His glory.*

Between the end of prophecy, at the time of the return from Babylonian exile, and the birth of Jesus, the genius of the Jewish people created a vast treasure of religious and ethical literature, which in common with the Hebrew Bible formed the mortar and cement of later New Testament revelation and teaching.

The Apocrypha (the Hidden or Outside Books), written between 200 B.C. and 100 A.D., are partly Wisdom writings and partly Apocalypses or revelations of the hereafter. The Sayings of Jesus Ben Sirach (200 B.C.) and the so-called Wisdom of Solomon (100 B.C.) re-

semble the canonical Books of Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes in their practical and moral teaching. The Apocalyptic Books (also included in the Apocrypha) such as Enoch, Esdras and the like, concern themselves chiefly with visions of Armageddon, the Messiah, the Day of Judgment and the fate of the good and the wicked in the life beyond.

Jesus Ben Sirach declares:

*Blessed is the man that doth meditate good things in wisdom and that reasoneth of holy things by his understanding . . . How great is the lovingkindness of the Lord our God, and His compassion unto such as turn unto Him in holiness.*

And in the Wisdom of Solomon we read:

*For God created man to be immortal and made him an image of His own eternity . . . The hope of the ungodly is like dust that is blown away with the wind; like a thin foam that is driven away with the storm; like as the smoke which is dispersed here and there with a tempest . . . but the righteous live for evermore; their reward is with the Lord and the care of them is with the most high.*

### III

The Book of Wisdom is in every respect the noblest and the most inspired of the Apocrypha. It was composed around the year 100 B.C. by an Alexandrian Jew who, while being steeped in Hellenistic philosophy, possessed a profound and intimate knowledge and understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures. In his work he attempted to combine Platonic speculation and Pythagorean mysticism with Jewish ethical monotheism. Greek ideas of the pre-existence of the soul and immortality are syncretized with Jewish concepts of resurrection, salvation, righteousness and redemption. The upright and the virtuous will be saved and redeemed in the world beyond the grave; the wicked will be consigned to everlasting darkness and spiritual death. He believed that death was the fruit of sin and the penalty for man's fall from grace.

*God did not make death and hath no pleasure in the destruction of the living. . . . Because God created man for incorruption (immortality) and made him an image of His own proper being; but by the envy of the Devil death entered into the world.*



Satan, in the form of the Serpent, glided into Eden and lured Adam to disobedience and ruin. And St. Paul declares:

*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. And so death passed on to all men. (Rom. 5:12)*

But though sin and retribution loom large in this Wisdom Book, as in all the Hidden Writings, the hope and promise of forgiveness and deliverance is held out to all who repent and return to God, the compassionate Father, full of *chesed*, full of lovingkindness.

*Thou hast mercy on all men because all things are in thy power, and thou dost overlook the sins of men, that they may repent. . . . For thou, O Lord, art gracious and true, long-suffering, and in mercy ordering all things.*

Repentance and atonement is to be a preparation for the coming Day of the Lord. John the Baptist preached the same awe-inspiring message: *Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*

It was the common belief, in those pre-Christian days when the Apocrypha were written, that the world was standing at the threshold of the Messianic Age, foretold by the Prophets. Not by force, nor by violence, not by terror nor by the bloodshed of insurgents would the new earth and the new heaven be created, but by the will and the might of the Lord Jehovah. The saintly Tobit who

lived in the shadow of sudden and horrible death, uttered this pious prayer:

*O Lord, Thou art just, and all Thy works and all Thy ways are mercy and truth and Thou judgest truly and justly forever.*

The days of wrath and trouble and despair under the harsh Roman yoke would be broken by the sound of the heavenly trumpet and followed by an ingathering of the living and the risen dead in the Valley of Decision. Justice would be meted out to the evildoers and to those who had suffered torture, agony and martyrdom. This martyr's death for *Kiddush Ha-Shem*, the sanctification of the Holy Name, is a vicarious atonement and an expiatory sacrifice for a sinful and iniquitous world. We read in the Second Book of Maccabees:

*But though the living Lord be angry with us for a little while, for our chastening and correction, yet shall He be at one again with His children. . . . For our brethren who now have suffered short pain are dead under God's covenant of everlasting life.*

It is written in the Gospel of St. Matthew: (5:10)

*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

In the Book of Wisdom the doctrine of immortality is linked with the faith in resurrection. The souls of the righteous, re-invested with undying spiritual life (the

Angel of Death having been driven from the world) will enjoy the bliss of God's ineffable Presence in the fellowship of patriarchs and saints. The souls of the wicked will continue in an endless, shadowy existence, neither life nor death but a painful and restless wandering about in the dark depths of Sheol.

In the other Apocryphal Books, resurrection is not merely spiritual but a reincarnation into new and deathless and incorruptible flesh. The souls of the righteous, after the coming of the Messiah, will dwell in paradise. The wicked shall suffer an eternity of torment in Hades.

Again we read the words of Jesus in the Gospel of St. Matthew:

*Many shall come from the East and the West and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven. . . . The Righteous shall inherit the Kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. (8:11, 12)*

As for the wicked—

*They shall be cast into the outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

## IV

The question of good and evil looms large in the Hidden Books. Man is subject to the laws of fate and the influences of his environment, his heredity and upbringing, but he is not doomed to everlasting damnation for his sins or the sins of his fathers. He has it in his power to choose the good and to reject the evil. It is that faculty which makes him a man—*But a little lower than the Angels.*

Adam's sin does not condemn man to eternal perdition. He has it in his power to redeem himself by his God-given intelligence, his conscience and his innate integrity. The soul of man is not the helpless plaything of blind fate and chance nor of the whims of Olympian gods and goddesses created in the likeness of man's passions and lusts. Moses, in the Book of Deuteronomy, proclaimed Man's freedom of choice:

*Behold I have set before thee this day life and good, death and evil.*

By death is here meant the soul's loss of immortality, its destiny of eternal union with God. It is written in the Book of Wisdom:

*The righteous man is God's son; He will uphold him. . . . For the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them. . . . They are at peace. . . . Their hope is full of immortality; and having borne a little chastening they shall receive great good. Because God made a trial of them and found them worthy of Himself. . . . And the faithful shall abide with Him in love . . . in grace and mercy.*

This is one of the most superb affirmations of faith in all religious literature. It is an exalted expression of man's reverence for the sublime. It is true religion. It is the certitude of man's place in the immortal scheme of the universe. St. Paul grasped its significance in his definition of faith as *the assurance of things hoped for, the substance of things not seen*.

The writer of Wisdom rises to lofty heights of poetry and inspiration in his conception of Wisdom as the Daughter of God, co-existent with the Creator, from the Beginning to the End of Days. She is the image and reflection of God's love and grace towards man, the noblest creature of His Spirit. Wisdom is the instrument and intermediary of the Lord in the creation and rule of the world.

*She is the breath of the power of God, a clear effulgence of the glory of the Almighty. . . . An unspotted mirror of the working of God and the radiance of His goodness.*



Wisdom is the personification of God's Word by which the heavens and the earth and all therein were made out of Chaos.

*O, God of the fathers who madest all things by Thy word. . . . And by Thy wisdom Thou formest man. . . . And hast inspired into him an active soul and breathed into him a vital spirit. . . . Send her forth out of the holy heavens; and from the throne of Thy glory bid her come. . . . For who ever gained knowledge of Thy counsel except Thou gavest wisdom and sentest Thy holy spirit from on high?*

It is also written in the Gospel of St. John, where the Word becomes Christ:

*The word that was with God, and the word that was God. . . . All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. . . . And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us. (1: 1, 3, 14)*

It is conceded by most Biblical scholars that the spirit, and often the very language of the Book of Wisdom is revealed in many of the passages of the New Testament.

*Wisdom reacheth out from one end of the world with strength and ordereth all things graciously.*

## V

The saints and mystics who wrote the Apocryphal Books comprising the Hidden Bible may have wandered far afield into the hazy domain of fantasy and revelation, but in this labyrinth of ecstasy and sibylline prognostication they never lost hold of the white thread of Prophetic idealism and the unshakeable faith in a divinely given *Torah* or guidance. Righteousness, justice, mercy, humility and piety—this is the core of prophetic and post-prophetic teaching.

Priest and Rabbi have plumbed deeper depths of legalism and ritualism; both have attained to higher reaches of theology; Rabbi and Churchman have penetrated farther into the thick forest of doctrine and dogma where no man can follow them without holding on to their skirts. But the debt of both to the Hidden Writings is far greater than is recognized or acknowledged.)

The Apocalyptic writers considered themselves the heirs of the Prophets but the Rabbis and Tannaim (Sages) warned against the unScriptural and uncanonical tendencies of these Hidden and Outside Books. They regarded them as misleading and confusing and banned them from being read in the home and synagogue. The Apocalyptic visions were non-Biblical in character. (The

dualism of a soul dwelling temporarily as tenant in a vile and corruptible flesh was alien to traditional Hebraic ideas of the body as a divinely fashioned and endowed vessel for the soul which was its spiritual content.) The revelations attributed to Enoch and Esdras and other ancient saints were cryptic and apocryphal. Only in Daniel and in a few scattered passages in Ezekiel and in Zechariah does prophecy resort to apocalypse. The angels and demons, the belief in a god incarnate, the fiery hells and glittering heavens, all these are rooted in Persian theology and Hellenistic mythology. The Graeco-Oriental mystery cults gave the Apocryphal visionaries their dreams of resurrection, of redemption and translation into a paradise of demigods and saints, presided over by an enthroned Son of Man; he who was the Logos before the creation; and the Word that would be made flesh to be sacrificed as a vicarious atonement for a sinful earth.

(The Hidden Books teemed with symbols, parables and allegories.) They were addressed to the Am-ha-Aretz, the common people, who in a time of national trouble, distress and subjugation, turned with yearning hearts to the promise of a World-to-Come, and the hope of personal salvation beyond the grave, in a sevenfold heaven of shining glory and endless bliss.

It is undeniable that the Rabbis were to some extent justified in their opposition to this pseudo-prophetic literature. Many of the House of Israel were lured away from the austere doctrines and rigid, innumerable observances of the Torah, into the broad and pleasant highway of

Hellenistic practices; and, years later, into the fold of the newly formed sect of Nazarenes which had absorbed the Apocryphal writings into the theology of the primitive Church.

Isaiah's ideal of a nation who as the Suffering Servant of God was chosen to be the means of bringing about the Messianic Age of peace on earth and goodwill to all—this ideal did not now suffice to comfort and console the stricken and restore hope to the crushed and the fallen. The individual soul cried out for some sign and token that the sufferings and miseries and injustices here below would be rewarded and compensated with joy and laughter, with singing and delight in the world beyond the grave. (The Apocalyptic writers, not content with the Rabbinic study and observance of the Law alone, gave the tortured heart of the people the promise of a personal Messiah who would come in glory and bring salvation to every man and every woman no matter how low, no matter how poor and ignorant.)

These concepts and beliefs about the afterworld were largely assimilated from the pagan civilizations during the Babylonian-Persian domination and, after the world conquest of Alexander the Great, from the debased and mongrelized Hellenistic culture compounded of decadent Hellenism and the sensuous, orgiastic "mysteries" that thrived in a world where philosophy had given way to sophistry and where religion had become an "escapism" from the intolerable emptiness, purposelessness and frustration of earthly existence.

But the Apocalyptic writers were Jews, even though most of their books were written in the Greek or Aramaic tongue. They were mostly Jews of the Essene sect who adhered rigidly to the ethical teachings of their faith and who in their writings amalgamated the Mosaic morality with the adopted theology of alien cults. And so in the spirit, and almost in the language of the Prophets, they wrote:

*Love the Lord with all your life, and one another with a true heart. . . . Make your hearts good before the Lord and your ways straight before men.*

With the promise of heavenly rewards they coupled the exhortation to goodness, piety and charity.

*Work righteousness therefore upon the earth, my children, that ye may have your treasure and your reward in heaven. . . . Whosoever teaches noble things and does them shall be enthroned with kings.*

In the spirit of Deuteronomy they declared:

*Choose therefore for yourselves either the light or the darkness; either the law of the Lord or the work of Satan.*

In Apocalyptic language they revealed how the world would be consumed by the wrath of a just God and how a new day would dawn and a new world would be created for the righteous saints.



*The day of doom shall be the end of this time and the beginning of the immortality for to come, wherein corruption is past, intemperance is at an end, infidelity is cut off, righteousness is grown and truth is sprung up. Then shall no one be able to save him that is destroyed nor to oppress him that hath been redeemed. . . . And after that day, saith the Lord, they will turn to me in uprightness and with all their heart and with all their soul. I shall create in them a holy spirit; and I shall cleanse them so that they shall not turn away from me from that day unto eternity. And their souls shall cleave to me and to all my commandments and I shall be their father and they shall be my children.*

The Hebraic faith in an All-Merciful, All-Just and All-Powerful Father in heaven was as strong in these Hidden Books as in the Prophets and the Psalms.

*Do ye also love one another, and with longsuffering forgive one another's faults. For God delighteth in the unity of brethren and in the purpose of a heart that taketh pleasure in love. . . . Unless ye keep yourselves from the spirit of lying and anger; unless ye seek truth and are patient and longsuffering, ye shall perish.*

The national tone is absent in these writings. They are concerned with the individual as a human being and not with Israel as a people. In that sense they are even more universalistic and all-embracing than the Prophets,

though they fall far below them in their concepts of ethical monotheism. But their moral teachings are miles above the Hellenistic stoicism and epicureanism of their age.

The righteous and Godfearing man

*Has no envy in his thoughts, nor does he worry his mind with insatiable desire. For he walketh in singleness of soul and beholdeth all things in uprightness of heart.* (Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs)

## VI

How deeply the New Testament writers drew on Apocryphal sources is especially noteworthy in reading the remarkable Book of Enoch and comparing many of its most significant passages with similar verses in the Gospels and in other New Testament Writings.

The Book of Enoch, written about 200–100 B.C., purports to comprise the visions and revelations of the ancient saint Enoch, the grandfather of Noah. We read in the 5th Chapter of Genesis: *and Enoch walked with God and he died not, for God took him*. St. Paul in his extraordinary tribute to the greatness and efficacy of faith declares in the 11th Chapter of Hebrews:

*By Faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found; because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.*

In the matter of resurrection the New Testament follows closely the doctrines enunciated in the *Hidden Books*. Jesus was questioned by the sceptical Epicurean Sadducees who denied the Pharisaic belief in the world-to-come. They took as the basis of their question the story in the Apocryphal Book of Tobit which relates that

in Ecbatana, a city in Media, a young Hebrew woman, Sara the daughter of Raguel, had married seven brothers in succession and each one of the young men had been slain on the wedding night by the devil Ashmodeus, before the marriage could be consummated. And the Sadducees asked Jesus: *which of these brethren would be her husband when they shall rise from the dead, seeing that she had been married to them all?* And Jesus replied (Mark 12): *when they shall rise from the dead they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels which are in Heaven.*

It is written in the book of Enoch (Ch. 104):

*Be hopeful and cast not away your hope, for ye will have great joy, as the Angels of Heaven . . . ye will become companions of the hosts of Heaven.*

The writers of the Apocrypha and the Apocalypses, from Daniel on, are not troubled as are the Psalmists and the Prophets and Job, by the question—why do the wicked prosper and why do the righteous so often suffer evil and misfortune? Enoch gives us the answer clearly and in unequivocal terms:

*And now fear not ye righteous when ye see the sinners grow strong and prospering in their evil ways, and be ye not like them and have no companionship with them, but keep far away from their violence; for ye will become companions of the hosts of Heaven . . . ye will not have to hide on the day of*

*the great judgement, and ye will not be found as sinners. And the eternal judgement (against sin) will be far from you for all the generations of the world . . . for I and my son will unite with the righteous for ever . . . and ye will have peace. Rejoice ye children of uprightness.*

In these *Hidden Books* that span the centuries between the Old Testament and the New, the King-Messiah becomes a divine, supernatural personage, the Son of Man, the Messiah (meaning also Christ and Anointed) who sits on the throne beside the Father and who is His agent and instrument in the rule and judgment of the world. This concept, not found in the Hebrew Bible, derives from the Apocryphal Writings.

The collected Sayings of Jesus gathered together by Matthew and embodied in the Sermon on the Mount, reflect the moral and religious teachings of the Prophets, the Psalms and the Wisdom Writings. The genius and inspiration of the Nazarene irradiated these Sayings and Sermons with a sublime simplicity and gave them a vibrant and vital effectiveness appropriate to every human need and applicable to every living soul. (Matt. Ch. 5-7)



## VII

Of all the Wisdom literature, the Book of Ecclesiasticus, written about 190 B.C., by Jesus Ben Sirach, has undoubtedly exerted the most profound influence on the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth. The following are some striking parallels, in addition to other verses quoted in this chapter:

Jesus—*Labor not for the meat which perisheth but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.*

Ben Sirach—*Lay up thy treasure according to the commandments of the most high and it shall bring thee more profit than gold.*

Jesus—*Where your treasure is there will your heart be also.*

Ben Sirach—*Watching for riches consumeth the flesh, and the care thereof driveth away sleep.*

Jesus—*Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Ben Sirach—*For gold is tried in fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity.*

Jesus—*The cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts of other things entering*

*in, choke the word and it becometh unfruitful . . . ye cannot serve God and Mammon.*

Ben Sirach—Prosperity and adversity, life and death, poverty and riches, come of the Lord. Wisdom, knowledge and understanding are of the Lord. Love and the way of good works are from Him.

In the spirit of Jesus Paul wrote: *Whatsoever a man soweth that also shall he reap.*

Ben Sirach—My son, sow not upon the furrows of unrighteousness and thou shalt not reap them sevenfold.

Jesus—Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you.

Ben Sirach—Bear not hatred to thy neighbor for any wrong and do nothing at all by injurious practices . . . remember the commandments and bear no malice to thy neighbor.

Jesus—By their fruit shall ye know them.

Ben Sirach—The fruit declareth if the tree had been dressed.

Jesus—Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely.

Ben Sirach—Laugh no man to scorn in the bitterness of his soul for there is one that humbleth and exalteth.

Jesus—A good man out of the treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good.

Ben Sirach—*The heart of a man changeth his countenance whether it be for good or for evil.*

Jesus—*Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.*

Ben Sirach—*Earth and ashes of what are ye proud? . . . My son, go on with thy business in meekness . . . exalt not thyself lest thou fall.*

Jesus—*Give to him that asketh thee and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away . . . if thou wilt be perfect go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven.*

Ben Sirach—*My Son, defraud not the poor of his living and make not the needy eyes to wait long. Make not an hungry soul sorrowful, neither provoke a man in his distress. Reject not the supplication of the afflicted; neither turn away thy face from the poor. Be as a father unto the fatherless so shalt thou be as a son to the Most High . . . the prayer of the humble pierces the clouds.*

We see therefore that the concept of God as a Heavenly Father was familiar and fundamental among the people to whom Jesus preached.

Jesus said: *I am the way, the truth and the life.*

Ben Sirach—*Strive for the truth unto death and the Lord shall fight for thee.*

Jesus—*In your patience possess your souls.*

Ben Sirach—*Be swift to hear and let thy life be sincere and with patience give answer.*

Jesus—*Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friend.*

Ben Sirach—*An honest man is surety for his neighbor. Forget not the friendship of thy surety for he hath given his life for thee.*

These passages evidently refer to the ancient custom of a man going surety for his neighbor or friend even to the point of bondage or death.

Jesus—*If ye forgive men their trespasses your Heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

Ben Sirach—*Forgive thy neighbor the hurt that he had done unto thee so shall thy sins also be forgiven when thou prayest.*

Jesus—*Be ye therefore merciful as your Father also is merciful.*

Ben Sirach—*The mercy of man is toward his neighbor but the mercy of the Lord is toward all flesh . . . How great is the lovingkindness of the Lord our God and His compassion unto such as turn unto Him.*

## VIII

In the days of Jesus the hope of immortality and the conviction of resurrection was an essential element in the faith of the people. This faith sustained the heart of the Jew and became, in the New Testament, *The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

We read in the Book of Wisdom (150 B.C.): *But thou O God art gracious and true, longsuffering, and in mercy ordering all things. For to know Thee is perfect righteousness, yea to know Thy power is the root of immortality.*

Tobit (100 B.C.), on his deathbed, leaves these parting words to his son: *Do that to no man which thou hatest. Give of thy bread to the hungry and of thy garments to them that are naked, and according to thy means give alms . . . and let not thine eye be haughty when thou givest alms . . . I will extol my God, and my soul shall praise the King of Heaven; I shall rejoice in His greatness. Let all men speak and let them praise Him for His goodness and His righteousness . . . all nations shall praise Him with great joy.*

Though the word of the Prophet had ceased in the land, the spirit of prophecy still inspired the Hebrew people, still exalted them in the worship and praise of



Jehovah under whose wing they sought shelter and in whose love and mercy they found comfort and solace from the hardness and cruelty of the oppressor. It was the same God-minded people that brought forth Isaiah and Jesus Ben Sirach and Jesus of Nazareth.

The Apocryphal Book known as the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, written about 100–25 B.C., has an extraordinary resemblance to many outstanding passages in the Gospels and in the writings of St. Paul. It is written in the Testaments:

*If a man sin against thee speak peaceably to him, and in thy soul hold not guile. And if he repent and confess forgive him. But if he deny it do not get into a passion with him, lest catching the poison from thee he takes to swearing and so thou sin doubly. And though he deny it and have a sense of shame when reprov'd give over reproving him, for he who denieth may afterwards be ashamed and repent and thus cease to wrong thee. Yea, he may also honor thee and turn to be at peace with thee. But if he be shameless and persisteth in his wrongdoing; even so forgive him from thy heart and leave to God the avenging.*

This was the sort of moral and religious teaching that Jesus acquired in his home, in the synagogue of his native town, and through his wide acquaintance with the Scriptures and with the Apocryphal writings current in his day. Hence when Peter asked Jesus: *Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Til seven*

times? Jesus replied: *I say unto thee, not until seven times but until seventy times seven . . . moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone, if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother.* (Matt. 18:21, 22)

Students of the Bible are often puzzled by the striking contrast between the Old and the New Testament writings with reference to the hereafter, to the Messiah and to the Day of Judgment. We know that Jesus based his teaching and his mission on the Prophets. On the Sabbath when he was received as an honored guest and Rabbi in the synagogue of Nazareth, his home town, he ascended the pulpit (Bima) and read from the 61st chapter of Isaiah: *The spirit of the Lord is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* After he had read this passage he closed the Book and gave it again to the minister. *And the eyes of all of them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him in wonder and amazement. And He said to them—this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*

We see here as in so many other New Testament passages and utterances of Jesus how firmly he was convinced that his coming was the fulfillment of prophetic prediction. But we do not find in the Old Testament any basis (if we except the Book of Daniel) for the eschatology found in the Gospels, in the Acts, in the Epistles and in

Revelation. For the source of these visions about the Son of Man, the Day of Judgment, of Heaven and Hell, of angels and demons and the like we must turn to the Apocryphal (the "hidden" or non-canonical) and the Apocalyptic literature (the end of this world and the coming of the Kingdom) which was written and widely read and disseminated in Palestine during the approximately three centuries between 200 B.C. and 100 A.D. The Books of Enoch which appeared during this period are masterpieces of mystic and apocalyptic writing. Here we have a vision of Judgment and of the hereafter:

*This Paradise is prepared for the righteous who endure all manner of offense from those who exasperate their souls, who avert their eyes from iniquity and make righteous judgment, and give bread to the hungry, and cover the naked with clothing and raise up the fallen and help the injured and the orphaned . . . if ill requitals befall you return them not either to neighbor or to enemy, because on the day of great judgment the Lord will return them for you . . . vengeance is mine saith the Lord.*

Unquestionably Jesus and the Gospel writers were well acquainted with the Books of Enoch, Esdras, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, the Book of Tobit and many others. Their ideas and visions of the "pangs of the Messiah" and of the New Heaven and the New Earth, were rooted both in the Prophets and in these later works of the mystics and Wisdom writers.

## IX

In the Apocalyptic visions found in the Book of Daniel and in other writings composed after the return from the Babylonian exile, the Messiah becomes transfigured into the Son of Man who sits on a throne at the right hand of God and who is as high above the angels as the heavenly hosts are above the sons of the earth. The Son of Man was with God before the Creation, when Chaos was steeped in darkness, and before the Word was spoken that brought light and form and life into the universe. The Son of Man was the Wisdom that dwelt with the Ancient of Days and was the favorite child of His bosom.

*The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old I was set up from everlasting; from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When He prepared the Heavens I was there; when He set a compass upon the face of the deep, when He appointed the foundations of the earth; then was I by Him, as one brought up with Him; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him. (Proverbs viii)*

In the Apocalyptic writings this spirit of wisdom, the favorite child of God, personified in the Bible, became the Messiah, the Son of Man who would come down from the heavens through clouds of glory, attended by the holy angels, and gather all the nations of the earth to judgment. The writers of Daniel and Enoch and the Testaments lived in a period when the hand of the conqueror and the oppressor was heavy on the nation. Israel groaned under the Graeco-Roman yoke of servitude. The Temple courts resounded to the tramp of foreign legions. The burden of tribute and taxation was wellnigh unbearable. The land was despoiled and impoverished. There was no hope of an earthly deliverer like the ancient Judges, Gideon and Jephthah and Deborah, who fought the battles of the Lord and overcame the Canaanite and the Philistine. The Maccabees won glorious victories over the Graeco-Syrians and restored the Temple worship but this redemption lasted for a very few years. Soon the eagles of Rome came and perched on the walls of the holy city, aye in the very temple gates; and the land lay in the shadow of their mighty wings.

The early years of Jesus were years of travail and tribulation for his people, of oppression and suffering and humiliation. Galilee and Judaea were seething with unrest and turbulence. For some of the nation there was hope in the sword, in the daggers of the Sicarii (the Zealots), and in a leader who would appear as the Anointed of the Lord and who by divine might would overthrow the tottering empire of Rome, restore the glory of Jerusalem and



make Zion the capital and the sanctuary of the whole world. But there were others in Israel who knew that to take up the sword would mean to perish by the sword. They saw their people as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, smitten, wounded and afflicted, who would be redeemed by a Heaven-sent Messiah, by a Savior clothed in radiance, descending to earth with a heavenly host of thousands and tens of thousands of fiery angels, as foretold in the Books of the Seers, by Enoch and Esdras and all the holy men of old.

“Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit saith the Lord.”

The great Day of the Lord will come; it is very close; the Day of Judgment and of Doom, the Day of divine wrath, of trouble and of woe, as proclaimed by the prophet Zephaniah; the Day when Gabriel’s trumpet shall terrify the living and rouse the dead out of their graves.

One of the Apocalyptic Books, written just before or during the life of Jesus, and circulated widely among the people was the so-called Ascension of Moses. Here we have a most vivid and fearful description of the End of Days:

*And the earth shall tremble; to its confines shall it be shaken; and the high mountains shall be made low; and the hills shall topple and fall. And the horns of the sun shall be broken and shall be turned into darkness. And the moon shall not give her light; and the circle of the sun shall be disturbed.*

How much Jesus was influenced and inspired in his preaching by these Apocalyptic visions we see strikingly manifested in the words of the Gospel. It is written in the 13th Chapter of St. Mark, where the Master speaks:

*But in those days after the tribulation, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light and the stars shall be falling from the heaven; and the powers that are in the heavens shall be shaken. And they shall see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then He shall send forth the Angels and shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth, to the uttermost part of the heaven.*

In those dread days the air was filled with speculation and calculation about the approaching world cataclysm; with Resurrection, the Messiah and Judgment standing at the door.

## X

The great ministry of Jesus lasted a total of about two or three years. Actually the Gospels give us an account of about 50 days of that ministry. The first and one of the most momentous of those days was the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan by his kinsman John. The Baptist was preaching in the wilderness of Judaea. He was calling the world to prayer, repentance and good works in preparation for the Day of the Lord which was near at hand. *Repent ye, he cried, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* For this was perhaps he of whom the prophet Isaiah had spoken (40:3): *The voice of one crying in the wilderness. Make ye ready the way of the Lord. Make his paths straight.*

His raiment was a coat of rough camel's hair cloth; a leather girdle encircled his waist; his food was wild honey and dried locusts. People said of him that he was the Prophet Elijah who had come down from Heaven to announce the advent of Messiah. Multitudes flocked to him from Jerusalem and Judaea and far-off Galilee to be baptised by him in the river Jordan near Jericho. Even aristocratic Sadducees and pious Pharisees mingled with the throngs; and John said to them: *Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth then fruits*

worthy of your repentance and begin not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham our father; for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. We are reminded here of the universalistic passages in many of the Prophets. Amos, the herdsman of Tekoah, speaks for the Lord:

*Are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O Children of Israel? Sayeth the Lord. Have I not brought you up Israel out of the land of Egypt? And the Philistines from Capthor, and the Syrians from Kir? Behold the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom; and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth.*

John the Baptist in his asceticism and austerity was close to the fellowship of the Essenes. This was a rigid Sabbatarian group, far more zealous and devout in the observance of the Law than the most fanatic Pharisees. They practised frequent baptism and other forms of purification. They adhered strictly to their principles of non-violence and pacifism. Private possessions they had none; everything was owned communally. They lived a semi-monastic life given over to prayer and meditation. Meals were eaten in common and in silence. All worked hard and whatever they earned and produced went into the common treasury. They practised moral and physical cleanliness to an extreme degree and every moment of life was dedicated to preparation and consecration for the Day of Judgment. They waited daily and prayerfully

for the coming of the Messiah and with it the resurrection of the dead followed by everlasting bliss and paradise for the righteous, while the souls of the wicked would perish in Gehenna. Many of the Essenes clustered around John and felt sure that he was Elijah the forerunner of the Messiah. *Behold I send my messenger, proclaimed Malachi, and he shall prepare the way before me. Behold he shall come saith the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire; and He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver. And He shall purify the sons of men, and refine them as gold and silver. And be a swift witness against the wicked and the unrighteous. But unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings.*

Matthew tells us that John recognized the Christ in Jesus and would not baptize him, saying, *I have need to be baptised of thee. But Jesus answering said unto him, suffer me now for thus it becometh to fulfil all righteousness. Then he baptised him.* (3:14, 15)

And when Jesus emerged from the waters of the Jordan he had a vision of the heavens opening up and the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, descending upon him. And he heard a voice from Heaven saying, *this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.*

This transcendent episode of a vision which climaxed a day of soul searching and religious ecstasy marks the turning point in the life of Jesus when he definitely recognizes his destiny and assumes the burden of the *pangs*



*of the Messiah.* He felt that he was the Servant of whom Isaiah prophesied, five hundred years ago: *Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth. I shall put my spirit upon him and he shall bring judgement to the gentiles.* Isaiah was speaking of Israel but, nonetheless, Jesus saw himself as the personification of the Suffering and Dedicated Servant.

## XI

In the story of the Mount of Temptation we have a symbolic episode of Jesus' inner conflict. It is the beginning of the Pangs of the Messiah, which he felt he must endure in order to fulfill what is prophesied. He saw himself as in a vision, assailed by the passions and impulses that snare and enmesh the human soul. He was tempted by Satan, (and Satan was no figment of the imagination but a real personification of the forces of evil to Jesus). The devil sought to lure him away from his Messianic mission. In his conflict with Satan whom the sages of that day conceived as the *Yetzer ha-rah*, the evil inclination of the heart, Jesus found strength and support in the sacred Book of Deuteronomy which he had learned almost by heart in his childhood studies. When he was tempted by easy gains, when stones would be turned into bread by the mere word of the Son of Man, he said, *It is written, man doth not live by bread alone* (Deut. 8). And when, in the vision that came to Jesus after days of fasting in the wilderness, Satan brought him to the holy city and set him on a pinnacle of the Temple and said to him: *If thou art the Son of God cast thyself down from hence for it is written* (and here the devil quoted Scripture), *He shall give his Angels charge over thee and on their*

*hands shall they bear thee up lest, haply, thou dash thy foot against a stone.* To which Jesus replied, again with a verse from Deuteronomy (6), *for it is written—‘Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.’* In the vision of the last temptation Satan carried Jesus up to the summit of a high mountain and showed him all the Kingdoms and dominions of the earth. *All these*, said the devil, *will I give into thine hand if thou wilt fall down and worship me.* Then Jesus said: *Get thee hence Satan, for it is written—‘Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve’* (Deut. 6.).

In this vision Jesus saw himself at the crossroads between two Messianic traditions: the national-universal, and the spiritual-universal. He rejected the concept of earthly sovereignty and the rule of a mighty King-Messiah. He chose rather to associate himself and his mission with the later Prophetic ideal of a universal spiritual Kingdom of God. However, he differed from the Prophets who saw the Kingdom established on this earth through righteousness and justice and good works. Jesus was steeped in the Apocalyptic mysticism of the Essenes and saw the Kingdom established in heaven after war and havoc and desolation upon earth. He foresaw a final and tremendous conflict between the forces of good and the powers of evil.

*The Son of Man shall send forth his angels and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that cause stumbling and them that do iniquity and shall*

*cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father. (Matt. 13:42, 43)*

We seek in vain for the roots of these apocalyptic visions and revelations in the Prophets and the Psalms. But when we turn to the pages of Enoch we read: *And the righteous shall be in the light of the sun; and the elect in the light of eternal life. But the wicked shall be, in the very great, open and weeping hell—a very terrible place, where the wicked are in pain awaiting the great judgement.*

On the Mount of Temptation Jesus made his final Choice of a Messiahship and a sovereignty that would be not of this earth. He issued his challenge to Satan and to all the gates of hell whom the Son of Man must battle and overcome before his rule and Kingship can be established and secured.

*The hour cometh and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live . . . for as the Father hath life in Himself even so gave He to the Son also life in Himself. And He gave Him authority to execute judgment for He is the Son of Man. For the hour cometh when all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice and come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life and they that have done ill, unto the resurrection of judgement. (John 5: 26, 27)*

There is a verse in the Book of Enoch which reads: *and the sum of judgement was given to the Son of Man.* When Jesus used the expression the Son of Man, he was giving it the meaning that was attached to it in the Book of Daniel and in the Apocryphal or Hidden Writings. It meant the Messiah, the Savior and Redeemer. John the Baptist had preached his approaching advent. John had performed the mission of Elijah the Announcer. He had proclaimed the coming of him *Who cometh after Me who is mightier than I and whose shoes I am not worthy to bear. He shall baptize you with fire and with the Holy Spirit.* (Mark 1:7, 8)



## XII

Jesus descended from the Mount of Temptation with all doubts and inner conflicts cleared away. The time was ripe, the days were fulfilled. He went back to Galilee and there he commenced his work of healing the sick, performing wonders and miracles, and preaching to vast multitudes of astonished and enraptured people. For he did not preach as did the Scribes and the Pharisees but *as one having authority*.

John the Baptist had been arrested at the order of Herod Antipas, the puppet ruler of Galilee. He was incarcerated in the dungeon of the Macherus fortress where at the instigation of Herodias and her daughter Salome he was beheaded for having denounced Herod's incestuous marriage with the wife of his living brother. While John was in prison he had heard of the wondrous works performed by Jesus and he sent two of his disciples to inquire: *Art thou He that should come or do we look for another?* Jesus told the messengers to return and tell John of the miracles that he, Jesus, was performing, the sick that were being healed, the lepers that were being made well, the blind that were being made to see, the deaf that were given back their hearing, the dead that were being raised. *And the poor have the Gospel preached to them.* (Luke 7:20-22)

Jesus went up and down in the land bringing the glad tidings to the poor and heavily-laden. What were those glad tidings? Jesus preached the approaching Day of Judgment. This generation would not pass away before all would be fulfilled. Many now alive would see the dead come out of their graves to stand before the Seat of Judgment. This was not a startling revelation to most of the listeners. There were other preachers going about, warning of the Coming End of Days, calling for repentance and purification. The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, which many read and many knew by heart, foretold the resurrection: *Then shall men arise; some to glory, some to shame . . . now grieve not my children that I am dying nor be cast down that I am coming to my end. For I shall rise up again to rule amongst you.*

Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God that would soon be established through the promised Messiah, the Son of Man. *Multitudes followed him and pressed upon him*, magnetized by his gentle and friendly presence, drinking his words of warning and rebuke, of comfort and of hope. They brought him their sick and suffering, their crippled and leprous and demented. He performed miracles and drove out demons. He soothed those who were possessed and he raised the dead.

How are we to evaluate and interpret those miracles of the wonder-working Rabbi? Some were cured of their psychic ailments by faith in his words, in the glance of his strange and compassionate eyes, in the gentle touch of his hand; some, though not actually cured, were so strength-

ened by their faith in him that nature began to work her cure within them; some were healed through suggestion, some through mass hypnosis. And some of the cures became miracles in the telling and retelling.

Undoubtedly certain of the miracle stories and wonder tales circulating about among the simple folk of Galilee or recounted in the popular Hidden Books, were absorbed into the Gospel Narratives. For example, the miraculous storm episode in Luke 8: 22-25 and in Mark 4:37-41 finds a remarkable parallel in the following incident related in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (100 B.C.).

*And our father said to us, come let us embark on our ship. And when he had gone on board there arose a vehement storm and a mighty tempest of wind; and our father who was holding the helm departed from us. And we being tost with the tempest were borne along over the sea; and the ship filled with water and was pounded by mighty waves and it was broken up . . . then Levi, girt about with sackcloth, prayed for us all unto the Lord. And the storm ceased and the ship reached the land in peace. And lo, our father came and we all rejoiced with one accord.*

I recall my grandfather in the little Ukrainian town of my birth, telling of the wonders and prodigies performed by the eighteenth century saint, Rabbi, Israel Bal Shem Tov (of the Holy Name). This Hassidic leader came to

his people in a time of pogrom and untold misery. He brought them renewed hope in God's goodness and grace. He came to the poor and downtrodden and he raised them up and set them—in the sight of heaven—by the side of, and even above, the learned, the scholars and the rich. He preached the religion of the heart; of song and cheer and fellowship rather than of mere piety and rigid observance. Remembering all that from the tales of my childhood I can well understand how Jesus won over the poor and humble, the wretched and underprivileged and how they saw wonders and miracles in every word and act and gesture of his exalted personality. He spoke the words of the Prophets and the Psalmists. He talked of good neighborliness, of love and kindness, of friendship and helpfulness. He placed moral conduct above observance and ritual. In that he belonged to the lineage of the great Prophets. He differed emphatically from the rigid formalism of the Rabbis and Pharisees of his day who drew no line and made no distinction between the letter of the Law and its spirit, between precept and moral principle. Deviation from one was as sinful and criminal as violation of the other. The conflict between priest and Prophet had not terminated with Malachi, the last of the Prophets. The Wisdom writers and sages down to the days of Jesus wrote and taught in the prophetic tradition. Ben Sirach, about 190 years B.C., declares:

*He that keepeth the law bringeth offerings enough.  
He that taketh heed to the commandments sacri-*

*ficeth a peace offering. He that requiteth a good turn maketh a meal-offering; and he that giveth alms sacrificeth a thank offering. Whoso honoreth his father maketh an atonement for sins; and he that doth reverence his mother bringeth acceptable sacrifice.*

The Hebrew word and concept for charity is *Tzed-dakah*, which is also the word for justice and righteousness. The Saint is a *Tzaddik*, a man who practices *Tzed-dakah*—charity, righteousness, justice. Unquestionably St. Paul had this in mind when he wrote:

*And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity. (I Cor. 13:13)*

And in the Testaments of the Patriarchs we read the attributes of the charitable man—the *Tzaddik*:

*If anyone is glorified he envieth him not. If anyone is enriched he is not jealous; if anyone is valiant he praiseth him; the virtuous man he laudeth; on the poor man he hath mercy; on the weak he hath compassion.*

Jesus called for a religion of the heart. Like Jeremiah he proclaimed *A new covenant*, written in the innermost soul. Thus it was with the Sabbath, thus it was with prayer and sacrifice. He quoted the Prophets—I *desire mercy not sacrifice*. He declared that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. In that he



was in agreement with his contemporaries, the saintly Hillel and the learned Jochanan Ben Zaccai, who had ruled that, *the Sabbath was given to you, not you to the Sabbath*. Jesus did not come to abrogate the Law.

*Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the Prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.* (Matt. 5:17, 18)

The law meant life and hope and redemption for the Jew. It was his sheet anchor in a turbulent sea of paganism and idolatry. Ben Sirach expresses it in deathless words:

*Before man is life and death, and whichsoever he chooseth, it shall be given him. To keep the commandments and to perform faithfulness is in thy power. The Lord created man at the beginning and endowed him with strength and the faculty of wisdom. He made him according to his own image and showed him good and evil . . . say not therefore I have sinned and no harm hath befallen me. For not for a single sin shalt thou go unpunished, neither say thou—his compassion is great; The Lord will overlook the multitude of my sins. For as his compassion is great so great also is his correction . . . the Lord is full of mercy towards the repentant . . . He forgiveth sins and saveth from affliction.*



## XIII

Jesus was an observing and devout Jew to the very day of his tragic death. But he protested vehemently against the petrification of the great Jewish code of ethics and morals. Like other great teachers of his people he sought to bring religion back to simple and basic truths and ideals. He did not, like the Scribes and Pharisees, despise the ignorant and unlearned, the *Am-ha-Aretz*, the people of the soil. He taught that the Kingdom of Heaven was for the meek and the poor and the innocent children. He broke down the walls of caste and privilege and held out the bounty of forgiveness and the promise of bliss to peasant and publican, to outcast and sinner. *Repent, go thy way, sin no more.* He taught in simple parables; little masterpieces and gems of storytelling and moral teaching. The people understood. It was not above their head. They did not have to stand at the door to receive the crumbs and crusts from the tables of the learned scholars; they were invited right in to sit at the feast. Redemption and salvation were for all whose hearts were open to love and charity and goodness; for all who prayed with the heart and not merely with the lips, for mercy and forgiveness. In all this he was a child of his faith.

In almost the very words of Leviticus and Deuter-

onomy he said, *be ye therefore perfect for your father in Heaven is perfect*. To those who sought salvation and hope in the Kingdom of Heaven he repeated the Commandments:

*God is one. Keep his laws and ordinances; love thy neighbor; honor thy father and thy mother; do not kill; do not steal; do not covet; do not bear false witness.*

He stressed the humanitarian commandments, justice and righteousness in human relations.

In the Gospel of St. Matthew the sayings of Jesus are nearly all included in the Sermon on the Mount. However, we know that these teachings were delivered on various occasions in the course of the ministry of Jesus. Matthew gathered them together from many sources and connected them in a masterly manner into one superb discourse. Readers and students of the Bible are all familiar with Old Testament parallels to many of the verses in the Sermon. Jesus was at home in every chapter and verse of the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms and the Wisdom Writings. Moreover he was intimately acquainted with the Apocryphal and Apocalyptic literature of his time.

No student of the Bible is worth his salt unless he is as well versed in these *Hidden Writings* as he is in the sanctified Canonical Books. He will learn that Jesus did not teach and preach a strange un-Jewish doctrine, even though he was anti-Pharisaic in tone and sentiment.

Much of the theology and the ethics of the New Testament, insofar as it is not derived from the Old, stems from Ben Sirach, from the so-called Book of the Wisdom of Solomon, the Books of Enoch, Esdras, the Twelve Patriarchs and other Apocryphal and Apocalyptic works.

We read in Matthew (5:43, 44): *You have heard it said—you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say unto you—love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you. And it is written in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs current at that same period: and now my children love ye each his brother and put away hatred from your hearts. Love one another in deed and in word and in the inclination of the soul. Moreover: if anyone seeketh to do evil unto you, do well unto him and pray for him, and ye shall be redeemed of the Lord from all evil.*

Jesus in his Sermon lays down the great Golden Rule: *whatever ye wish that men should do unto you do ye so unto them; for this is the law and the Prophets.* This sublime teaching is also reflected in the Book of Enoch: *what a man asketh for his own soul, so let him do to every living soul.*

Jesus admonishes us about oaths: *but I say unto you, do not swear at all; either by Heaven for it is the throne of God, nor by the earth for it is His footstool.*

And Enoch: *swear not by any oath, neither by Heaven, nor by earth, nor by any creature created by God.*

In the Sermon we are warned, *that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery*

*with her in his heart. Listen to what the Testaments have to say: he that hath a pure mind looketh not after a woman with lust, for he hath no defilement in his heart. Because the spirit of God resteth upon him.*

Jesus preaches non-violence: *resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek turn to him the other also.* To which our saintly Enoch (a century or two earlier) says, Amen: *endure for the sake of the Lord every wound, every injury, every evil word and attack. If ill requitals befall you return them not either to neighbor or to enemy.*

In the prayer of Manasses, composed in the 1st century B.C., we find a noble and lofty concept of God, echoing and reflecting the words of the Psalmist—for His mercy endureth forever:

*For thou art the Lord most high, of great compassion, long suffering and abundant in mercy, and dost grieve at the evils of men. Thou O Lord, according to thy great goodness hast promised repentance and forgiveness to them that have sinned against thee. Out of thy infinite mercies thou hast appointed salvation for repentant sinners. I am bowed down with many iron bands, that I cannot lift my head by reason of my sins, neither have I any respite, for I have provoked thy wrath and done that which is evil before thee. Now therefore I bow the knee of my heart beseeching thee of Grace. I have sinned O Lord, I have sinned and I acknowledge mine in-*

*iniquities, but I humbly beseech thee; forgive me O Lord, forgive me and destroy me not with mine iniquities.*

This sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart is reflected again in the New Testament parable of the two men who went up into the Temple to pray:

*And the publican standing afar off would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast saying—God be merciful to me, a sinner. (Luke 18:13)*

We see therefore that the Gospel of love and kindness, of charity and humility, did not sound new and foreign in the ears of those who were familiar with the rich religious literature of that day.

## XIV

Jesus stands out not alone for these moral axioms and formulae but for the goodness, purity, nobleness and selflessness of his personal life. And it was with one's personal existence and one's individual dedication to the good life at the end of which lies immortal felicity that Jesus was particularly concerned. He was not interested in national redemption but in the salvation of each human soul; its worth, its integrity, its goal and destiny. This personal religion is found expressed and exemplified in many of the Psalms and the Prophets. It reaches its climax in Job's recognition of God's nearness to him: *I know that my redeemer liveth*. Jesus says: *Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God*. In which he also voices the thought and reflects the spirit of the verse in Enoch: *God requires a pure heart, and by this test tries the heart of man*. Back of these words of Jesus and of Enoch and other sages and saints are the teachings of Hosea and Micah and the rest. The meek and the humble are blessed and are filled with hope and the promise of joy, *for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven*. In Ben Sirach we read:

*For the beginning of pride is when one departeth from God, and his heart is turned away from his*



*maker. But wisdom lifteth up the head of him that is lowly, and maketh him to sit among great men . . . set not thine heart upon thy goods and say not, they are sufficient for me. For gold hath destroyed many and perverted the hearts of kings. Blessed is the man that is found without blemish and whose soul hath not been corrupted by gold.*

Jesus speaks frequently of the coming Kingdom and of the Son of Man:

*When he shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him. And before him shall be gathered all the nations; and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. (Matt. 25:32)*

There is no doubt in the mind of Jesus about his being the Son of Man, the King-Messiah.

*And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand: Come ye, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (25:34)*

Jesus mingles ethics with eschatology and sets forth an unsurpassed moral formula:

*For I was an hungred and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was a stranger and ye*

*took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me.*

And when those on the right object that to their knowledge they had never done those things for him, he replies: *inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me.* (25:40)

We read in the Testaments of the Patriarchs:

*I was sold into slavery and the Lord of all made me free. I was taken into captivity and his strong hand succored me. I was beset with hunger and the Lord himself nourished me. I was alone and God comforted me. I was sick and God visited me. I was in prison and my God showed favor unto me; in bonds and he released me.*

Religious literature does not rise much higher in the expression of piety and of trust in the Lord's goodness.

We read further in the same Chapter in Matthew that the wicked, on the left, are ordered to: *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.* For, *inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these ye did it not unto me.* A similar but less harsh condemnation of wickedness and sin is given us in the Book of Esdras:

*Then shall the most high say to the nations that have been raised from the dead (for judgment). Look now and consider, Whom ye have denied, Whom ye have not served, Whose commandments ye have despised.*

## XV

The occasion of the revisit of Jesus to his native town of Nazareth turned out to be one of the saddest and most poignant events in his life. On the Sabbath in the synagogue, after he had read the notable passage from the 61st Chapter of Isaiah and had declared to the wondering congregation: *This day the prophecy has been fulfilled*, the people marvelled and said: *Is not this Joseph the carpenter's son?* and they looked for him to perform some of those miracles which they had heard had been performed by him in many places. But in Nazareth Jesus did not heal the sick nor drive out demons, nor exorcise evil spirits nor give back to the lame and the paralyzed and the crippled the strength and life of their limbs. He felt that his old neighbors and acquaintances had no faith in his works. He was, *A Prophet without honor in his own country*. When he spoke of Elijah and Elisha who had raised the dead and cured the leper in a pagan land the people began to mutter among themselves. After a while this murmuring became an outcry of wrath against Jesus who had presumed to speak of himself as the Anointed and to couple his name with the venerated names of Elisha and Elijah. The mob grew more violent and threatening. Cries of *Blasphemy* (a mortal offense) were

heard, arms were raised. Jesus was pushed and carried to the brow of a hill overlooking the town. He would have been thrown down headlong and killed had it not been for the intervention of some of his old friends who had not forgotten the meek and gentle and quietly studious youth. So he was saved and, *passing through the midst of them He went away.*

We may imagine the feeling of his family, of his distracted mother and his brothers and sisters on this dreadful and humiliating occasion. He had been away from home ever since he had gone down to Jericho to be baptised by John. They had heard of his preaching and his works but had no direct communication from himself. His disciples were now his family. Simon, called Peter, James and John the sons of Zebedee, Matthew or Levi, the publican, and the others of the twelve fishermen and farmers whom he had chosen to follow him and to whom he had given authority to preach that *the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*; the devoted disciples whom he had empowered *to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to cleanse the lepers and to cast out devils*. These dedicated and consecrated followers: *These are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.*

The gathering clouds of hostility from the rich and the powerful, from the politicians and the clergy, grew darker and more sinister. Jesus bitterly attacked all franchise and privilege for personal profit and position. He had said that it would be easier for a camel to go through the

eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the gates of paradise. Unquestionably the rich of that day were grinding down the faces of the poor. After interest to the moneylender, and taxes to Caesar and tithes to the priest there was little left for the poor to keep body and soul together. Jesus excoriated this state of affairs in his parable of Dives and Lazarus. The rich man who had been clothed in purple and had feasted sumptuously every day now lay in hell in eternal torment. The poor man, Lazarus, who had been full of sores and had been glad to receive the crusts and crumbs from the rich man's table, *now lay in Abraham's bosom*. The poor man was comforted in paradise while the rich man was in anguish in hell and cried out: *Father Abraham have mercy upon me and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue for I am in agony in this flame*. Words and parables like these were not calculated to allay the rising storm of fury that was sweeping the country against the Galilean prophet. The great mass of plain simple people still followed Jesus about in huge throngs; still believed in the wonderworking Rabbi; still clamored for more and more miracles; still pleaded for healing and cure. But the Nazarene was showing signs of growing weariness and irritation. He was becoming more prone to denounce, to warn and to threaten. The strain of constant contact with a semi-hysteric multitude was beginning to tell on the frail and sensitive physique. The bitter animosity of the Pharisees and leaders, the questionings, the tricks, and ruses, the quibbles and controversies

over Scriptural passages, the biting criticism over minor and trivial breaches of the Law, all these produced a noticeable and significant change in the temper and bearing of the once mild and gentle Jesus. The Scribes and the Pharisees were the particular target of his attacks. They were hypocrites, whited sepulchres: *all their works they do to be seen of men . . . but thou when thou givest alms let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.* They sit in the seats of Moses and the Prophets but they have killed the spirit of the holy teaching and have sanctified the letter. They were rigid in their observance of all the minutest precepts of the dietary laws. But Jesus said: *Not that which entereth into the mouth defileth the man but that which proceedeth out of the man, this defileth the man.* They charged him with eating with publicans and sinners, and he replied: *They that are whole have no need of a physician but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous but the sinners to repentance.* When they—the Pharisees and Scribes—rebuked him for speaking with more authority than Moses or the Prophets who had always declared, *Thus saith the Lord*; Jesus made it clear on various occasions that:

*The Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father doing; for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner; for the Father loveth the Son and showeth him all things that He himself doeth. (John 5:19, 20)*



## XVI

Jesus had gone in his thinking beyond the concept of himself as the Son of David. He had quoted Psalm 110 to deny that the Messiah must be of the house of David. He was the Son of God. He spoke of the Father in a special sense and not in the way the other Jews meant when they prayed, *Our Father, our King*. He declared:

*I am the light of the . . . world . . . I am the bread of life . . . whatsoever ye shall ask in My name that I will do, that the Father be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name that will I do.* (John ch. 6)

These were awesome words, never uttered before in Israel; these were things never before spoken by Prophet or priest, from Moses down. There were days of heavy stress and profound inner trial for Jesus as he sat and meditated on his mission and his destiny. He was the promised Messiah, the Son of Man. He was the Son of God who had been with the Father before the very Beginning when all was Chaos: *Tohu ve vohu*. He was the Word through which the world was conceived and born. He was the *wisdom, the breath of the power of God*, as is written in the holy Book of Esdras. And it is likewise

written in the Book of Ben Sirach: *By the word of God were His works created*. These were writings very familiar to Jesus; and they entered into his religious concepts. They helped to fashion the image of himself which had taken complete possession of his thinking.

In Enoch he had read—and it seemed a clear and unmistakable prophecy of himself:

*Mine elect shall sit on the throne of glory. He shall be a light to the Gentiles and the hope of those who are troubled in heart . . . the Son of Man shall put down the kings from their thrones . . . the kings and the mighty shall perish, and their kingdom shall be given into the hands of the righteous and the holy.*

Psalm 37: *But the meek shall inherit the earth and delight themselves in the abundance of peace.*

Formerly when Jesus had cautiously expressed these thoughts about his Messiahship he had charged his disciples to keep these matters secret. But now he felt that the time had come for him to reveal himself in his true role and to disclose the fate for which he had been pre-ordained. This turning point in his life came while he and his disciples were sojourning near the sources of the Jordan. Jesus had been praying alone and was in a mood of quiet ecstasy. He asked his disciples, *Who do the people say that I am?* Some said, *Elijah*. And others said, *John the Baptist*. And Jesus said to them, *But who do you*

say that I am? And Peter answered, *Thou art the Messiah, Son of the living God*. And now Jesus declared to his disciples that he must go up to Jerusalem and reveal himself; and that he would suffer many things, even unto death.

Jesus felt that the time had come when he must follow the path of the great prophets and proclaim his mission in the courts of the Temple and in the streets of the holy city. He faced this choice with inner dread and foreboding, for he knew that in the sophisticated capital ruled by the sceptical Sadducees and educated under the formalistic Pharisees he could not show the signs nor perform the wonders that had gathered throngs of worshipful followers around him among the *Am-ha-Aretz* (the unlettered people of the soil) in rustic Galilee. He too, like the Prophets, detested and distrusted the great city. He too preached the simple faith and the homely virtues of the pastoral pioneer forefathers. In Jerusalem this pure and primitive faith, this ethical teaching of the Prophets was always confronted by the hostility and opposition of priest and sycophant, of privilege and power and wealth, with all their trappings and their pomp. But in the determination of Jesus to go up to Jerusalem there were other motives even more powerful and more compelling than the urge to denounce the evils of greed and injustice and oppression, as did Amos and Jeremiah and the other Prophets. Jesus had become convinced that it was of him that Isaiah had spoken the momentous words: *Behold I create new Heavens and a new earth . . . and the former things shall not be remembered nor come to mind*. He

had a premonition that in Jerusalem, *where the Prophets perish*, his earthly ministry and life would come to an end. And again he saw himself as the Suffering Servant, pictured by Isaiah, who would be the lamb led to slaughter for the iniquities and transgressions of the people, who had gone astray like sheep. Yet:

*The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great and he shall inherit the name of the mighty.*

Isaiah's vision of his people in exile, purified and refined in the crucible of suffering and humiliation, became in the mind of Jesus and in the concept of his followers, the living Messiah:

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent His Son into the world that through Him the world might be saved. (John 3:16, 17)*

Jesus, whose soul was steeped in the words of the Prophets, beheld in the vision of the Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah, a forecast and a foretelling of his own approaching martyrdom.

*For I say unto you that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me; and he was reckoned*

*among the transgressors; for the things concerning me have an end.*

We read in the Gospel of St. Mark that in fulfillment of Prophecy:

*The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed; and after three days rise again.*

The suffering and the death were to bring healing and redemption to a sinful world. The resurrection was to usher in the Day when some would arise to eternal life and bliss, and many would awaken to everlasting torment and shame.

The clouds of scepticism, of intrigue and menacing hate were lowering over the head of the Preacher as he wandered with his disciples through the land.

*The foxes have holes and the birds of the Heaven have nests but The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head. (Luke 9:58)*

Even his most intimate followers began to doubt and to question. Peter staunchly sought to dissuade the Master from the perilous plan of the entry into Jerusalem. Then Jesus said unto his disciples:

*Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die it abideth by itself alone; but if it die it beareth much fruit. Even so I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. (John 12:24)*

Here the idea of death and transfiguration harks back to its primitive origins in the burial of the seed and in its resurrection out of the tomb to the blessing of eternal life in an ever recurring cycle of death and rebirth. Jesus was not to be moved from his resolve.

*He that loveth his life loseth it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. Verily, my soul is troubled and what shall I say—Father, save me from this hour? Nay! For this cause came I unto this hour, to glorify the name of my Father. (John 12:25-28)*

And so Jesus set his face steadfastly towards Jerusalem.



## XVII

The narrative descriptions of the trial and conviction of Jesus were written two and three generations after the events had transpired. The Gospels had undergone change, emendation, and revision. The cleavage between the Jewish and Gentile sections of the early Church had grown wider and deeper. The Hellenistic influence and elements injected into the new faith by Paul grew constantly stronger and attracted ever larger masses of converts among the Greeks, Romans, Syrians and others. The schism between the Jewish and Gentile Christians grew sharper and more bitter from day to day. The Gospels were re-edited and re-written with increasing anti-Jewish animus and bias. It was made to appear that *the Jews* as a whole, individually and collectively, were guilty of the murder of the Founder of the faith. Pontius Pilate was represented as an innocent and well-meaning Roman administrator who washed his hands of all responsibility for the sentence of death thrust upon him by the Sanhedrin of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Careful and painstaking historic study has established the fact beyond the shadow of a doubt that Jesus was one of many Jews, especially Galileans, whom the Romans arrested and crucified on the mere suspicion of sedition

and treason against Caesar. Jesus had entered Jerusalem as the King-Messiah, seated on a colt and surrounded by his disciples and a multitude of enthusiastic followers, singing Psalms, waving palm branches and shouting, *Hosanna to the King of Israel!* This was enough for the Romans to liquidate him as they had crushed so many countless others who were suspected of inciting the people to rebellion and insurrection.

On the night of betrayal and Passion in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus stands before all the world and all the ages as the sublime Man of Peace, proclaiming the great truth that, *"They that take up the sword shall perish by the sword."* But while he speaks here with the voice and in the spirit of the Prophets he is also heir to the Saints of the Hidden Writings from whom he has derived his mystic belief in the destiny of the Messiah, the Anointed, for whom it was decreed in the Book of Fate, eons before Creation, that he was to die for Adam's transgression and be reborn for the earth's deliverance. At the very threshold of catastrophe and doom Jesus reiterates and reaffirms his unquenchable faith in his divine essence and authority. He rebukes a disciple for drawing his sword, *"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father in Heaven and He shall presently send me more than twelve legions of angels?"* Even as the Lord of Hosts had sent horses and chariots of fire and fiery angels to defend His prophet, Elisha. And even as Sennacherib and Nicanor with all their invincible armies were smitten by the Archangel. (Second Maccabees, 15:22-25)

But Jesus did not invoke the help of his Father nor the intervention of the celestial powers. Instead, when the Romans and the rabble seized him, he uttered these words of resignation: "*For then how else shall the Scripture be fulfilled?*" As it is written in the Prophets, as it is foreseen in the revelations so must the role assumed by Jesus of Nazareth be played out to the bitter end.

Jesus was already a doomed man when he was arrested by the Roman guard on that fateful night in the Garden of Gethsemane. The examination before a few hastily gathered members of the Sanhedrin was not a trial and was not conducted either in time or procedure according to the rigidly established and meticulously observed laws of evidence and rules of examination laid down by the Jewish code as we have it in the Talmud. The High Priest and his Sadducee party of Hellenist aristocrats and collaborators hated Jesus and feared his influence with the people against their corrupt and venal conduct of affairs.

But some of the Pharisees in the Sanhedrin including Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, found no fault in the teachings of Jesus even though they thought him extreme in some of his views. They would never have submitted to the "framing" and "railroading" of an accused man who stood so high in the affection and veneration of the people and who preached in the language and spirit of the Prophets. Jesus was convicted as a political offender against the Roman empire, for which the penalty was the horribly inhuman Roman death by torture and crucifixion. No Roman procurator ever had any

hesitancy or qualms about ordering such slow death by diabolical torment whenever there was the slightest suspicion of anti-Roman agitation. Philo, the Alexandrian philosopher who was a contemporary of Jesus, charges Pilate with, *corruption, violence, robberies, ill-treatment of the people, grievances, continuous executions without even the form of trial, endless and intolerable cruelties*. And Josephus, despite all his catering to his Roman masters, tells of the gruesome forests of crosses planted by Pontius Pilate on all the hills of Judaea and Galilee for Jewish victims of Roman ruthlessness.

We find a significant passage in the Gospel of St. Luke, 13:1, which contributes some striking testimony to the rather obscure record of Pontius Pilate. It tells of a barbarous massacre of Galileans by the Procurator.

*There were present at that season some that told Jesus of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.*

This brief and bare report of a not uncommon Roman atrocity perpetrated in Galilee and Judaea gives us a fleeting glimpse into the true character of the man who is reputed to have cynically washed his hands of guilt before condemning Jesus to scourging and the cross.

About five years after the Crucifixion, Pilate was recalled to Rome and banished to some penal colony on a conviction for avarice and brutality far beyond even the cold-blooded practices of Roman imperial administrators.

## XVIII

During the brief and perfunctory interview in the praetorium between the prisoner and the imperial governor, Pilate cynically inquired, *Art thou a King then?* To which Jesus answered, *Thou sayest that I am a King . . . to this end was I born and for this cause am I come into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth.*

*What is truth?* said the contemptuous Pilate and, without waiting for an answer, ordered the condemned man to be taken out and scourged before being nailed to the cross.

A century earlier the sublime answer to the question—*What is truth?*—was given by a Jewish forerunner of Jesus in the Book of Esdras.

*Great is the earth, high is the heaven, swift is the sun in his course, for he compasseth the heavens round about and fetcheth his course again in his own place in one day. Is not the maker of these things great? All the earth calleth upon truth and the heaven blesseth her; for with her is no unrighteous thing. Truth abideth and is strong for ever, she liveth and conquereth for evermore. With her there is no accepting of persons or rewards; but she doeth the things that are just and refraineth from all*



*unrighteous. and wicked things. Neither in her judgement is any unrighteousness; and she is the strength and the kingdom and the power and the majesty of all ages. Blessed be the God of truth.*

Jesus was condemned, tortured and executed by the Romans on the charge of inciting the people to sedition, revolt and riot. The procurator was above all concerned with keeping order in his province and in the turbulent city of Jerusalem; particularly during the Passover Feast of liberation from bondage and servitude. Uprisings among this restless and freedom-loving people were occurring incessantly and they had to be nipped in the bud with the most extreme measures. And so the historic crime was committed and the young Preacher who was acclaimed as the Messiah of the royal house of David was shamefully and atrociously crucified as *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*.

The High Priest and his clique of sycophants and collaborating politicians were undoubtedly pleased that the mystic young trouble-maker was out of the way. He had preached against the established Church of his day. He had denounced the power and greed and corruption of the rich and mighty. He had shaken the very foundations of the edifice of privilege and caste and authoritarian rule. The priests and Jewish rulers betrayed him, the Romans scourged him until his flesh was raw and bleeding, but the Jewish people of Galilee and Judaea sorrowed for him and grieved over their shattered hopes.



On the road to Calvary Jesus *was followed by a great multitude of people, of men and of women, bewailing and lamenting Him*. They were the Jews, the great mass of plain and simple people, the oppressed and sorely-tried people, who were guiltless of the great martyr's blood but whose children for well-nigh two thousand years would be despised, hated, rejected and wounded for the sin and crime of imperial Rome.

What an eternity lies between Golgotha and that sunny joyous morning only a few days earlier when Jesus came riding into the city followed and surrounded by a great multitude who spread their garments before the hoofs of his colt and cried, *Hosanna to the King of Israel! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord*. Instead of a throne there is a cross on Calvary; instead of a glorious redemption there is suffering and humiliation. But the people remember the exhortation of one of their noblest Prophets: *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God*, and their hearts turn again to the vision of a heavenly kingdom, divinely ordained and divinely established, through the true Messiah whose coming cannot now be long delayed, for the bitter cup is full and overflowing. Revolt and insurrection lead only to bloodshed and torture and death; the powers of evil are too mighty for earthly weapons and the strength of flesh and blood. The Prophets and the Saints have given us the promise of the Lord that the day of His deliverance will come. These horrors and agonies, these are but the shadows and portents of infinitely greater events and

calamities which the world must endure before the great Day of the Lord will dawn. *On that day, the ancient saint Enoch tells us, Mine elect shall sit on the throne of glory and shall try their works. Then will I cause mine elect to dwell among them and I will transform the heaven and make it an eternal blessing and light. And I will cause my saints to dwell in it.*

The Son of Man is not mentioned in the Old Testament, except in the semi-Apocryphal passages in Daniel. But the New Testament writers see the Son of Man revealed to them in all his radiance and effulgence here in these post-prophetic Apocalypses. The name, the divine mission and origin stem from these Apocryphal Books. In his lifetime Jesus speaks of himself often as the Son of Man. After his crucifixion, by a miracle unparalleled in history, he becomes the Risen Messiah, in the minds of men, and like Moses and Elijah, *but greater than these*, he ascends to heaven, according to the Gospel writers, to sit on the right hand of his Father. Can it be that these writers and Apostles were entranced and enraptured by the dreams of Enoch and Esdras even as they were inspired and transported by the visions of Isaiah and Micah and Joel? It is written in Enoch:

*For from the beginning the Son of Man was hidden, and the Most High presented Him in the presence of His might. And all the kings and the mighty and exalted of the earth, shall worship and set their hope upon the Son of Man and petition Him and supplicate for mercy at His hands.*

## XIX

Jesus rarely deviated from his other-worldly concept of the Kingdom of Heaven. This world must and would come to an end. It was inevitable and it seemed to him immediate. The goods of this world were vanity and delusion. The true treasure was in heaven where moth and rust doth not corrupt and eat away. *Sell all thy goods, and give to the poor; for of what use will your riches be when Gabriel's trumpet blows? Thou hast a treasure of work laid up with the Most High but it shall not be showed thee until the End of Days.* (Esdras)

When Jesus said, *The kingdom of heaven is within you*, he meant that it is within you by prayer and penitence and good works to win admittance to the glorious paradise of the elect. He never regarded this mundane world as a possible heaven for mankind. It was doomed to destruction.

In the immortal Sermon on the Mount, as well as in the other Sayings of Jesus and in his unparalleled Parables, we find an epitome of Prophetic moral teaching with the emphasis not so much on the collective personification of Israel but rather on the individual human being for whose healing and salvation Jesus worked and prayed. In his ethical preaching, in his concern with

righteousness and goodness and mercy, Jesus showed himself a true *Son of the Prophets*, and an exponent of their loftiest ideals and principles. On the other hand, his relationship and affinity with the mystic religious writings of his time is not so well known nor so widely recognized. It is to these post-Prophetic sources that Jesus owes many of his ideas and doctrines about angels and demons, about hell and paradise, about the Messiah, the Day of Judgment and the Kingdom of Heaven.

In the field of moral philosophy and practice the kinship of Jesus and the Apostles with the Jewish Wisdom and Apocryphal literature of their day is also strikingly close and profound.

*Even as a man doeth to his neighbor even so will the Lord do unto him . . . they who have died in grief shall arise in joy; they who were poor for the Lord's sake shall have abundance; they who were put to death for the Lord's sake shall awake to eternal life. (Testaments of the Patriarchs)*

These words of comfort and faith were written during the first and second century B.C. when torture and martyrdom and crucifixion were portioned out by the oppressor to thousands of Jews who gave their lives gladly for the sanctification of the Holy Name.

*The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God . . . and there shall no evil touch them . . . their reward is in the Lord and the care of them with the Most High.*

These immortal lines from one of the Wisdom Books sum up the faith of Jesus, the martyred son of a martyr people.

Whether paradise and Gehenna endure; whether the belief in the resurrection of the dead is discarded; whether the miracles and wonders and theological speculations give way to philosophical concepts and scientific principles; whether religion emerges from the swaddling clothes of primitive mysteries; whether faith becomes more spiritual and universal—less denominational and creedal; whether angels and demons are banished to the limbo of fairies, giants and hobgoblins; whether the secrets of life and death are ever resolved or shall always remain beyond the ken of human vision—the radiant personality of the man Jesus will be enshrined in the human heart for time without end, and preserved in mankind's memory as the embodiment and symbol of perfect love, goodness, unselfishness, grace and human dignity—and of the knowledge of God which is the soul and substance of wisdom.





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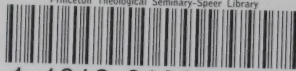
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